

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3673
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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 10973

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UK
SUBJECT: HEATH'S PRESENT POSITION ON CONSERVATIVE PARTY
AFFAIRS

REFERENCE: LONDON 9269 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ON TWO RECENT OCCASIONS FORMER CONSERVATIVE
LEADER HEATH HAS COME OUT INTO THE OPEN TO EXPRESS DIS-
AGREEMENT WITH TACTICS AND POLICIES OF CURRENT PARTY
LEADERSHIP. IN A TV INTERVIEW JULY 4, HEATH DEPLORED
PARTY'S POLICIES OF NON-COOPERATION AND DELAYING OF
GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM THROUGH BREAK IN NORMAL
CHANNELS (I.E., PAIRING). IN A WIDELY PUBLICIZED SPEECH
IN HOUSE OF COMMONS JULY 7, HEATH PRAISED GOVERNMENT'S
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ACHIEVEMENT IN WORKING OUT SECOND ROUND OF WAGE RE-

STRAINT POLICY. IN ADDITION TO UNDERCUTTING PRESENT TACTICS OF CONSERVATIVE LEADER THATCHER, HEATH APPEARS INTERESTED IN ADDING LUSTER TO HIS OWN RECORD DURING 1970-74 PERIOD BY PRAISING GOVERNMENT POLICIES SIMILAR TO THOSE HE EARLIER ESPOUSED. END SUMMARY

1. IN RECENT WEEKS HEATH HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED DIS-AGREEMENT WITH CONSERVATIVE PARLIAMENTARY TACTICS AND ECONOMIC POLICIES, FURTHER WIDENING THE BREACH BETWEEN HIM AND CONSERVATIVE LEADER MARGARET THATCHER. INCREAS-INGLY HE APPEARS TO BE DISTANCING HIMSELF FROM MRS. THATCHER, CONFIRMING PUBLICLY, AS WELL AS PRIVATELY, AN UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT A POST IN HER SHADOW CABINET, AT LEAST UNTIL A GENERAL ELECTION APPEARS IMMINENT.

2. HEATH CONTINUES TO BE MOTIVATED BY DEEP-SEATED FEELINGS OF HAVING BEEN REJECTED BY THE PARTY AND DESERTED BY HIS FRIENDS AND FORMER SUPPORTERS. HE CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT HIS POLICIES, WHICH LED TO CON-SERVATIVE ELECTORAL DEFEATS IN 1974, WERE RIGHT. HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE TO THE PARTY'S CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP AND APPEARS TO BE AFFRONTED BY MRS. THATCHER BOTH PERSONALLY AS WELL AS POLITICALLY. PROBABLY BASIC IN THIS FEELING IS HEATH'S REPORTED AVERSION TO STRONG FEMININE PERSONALITIES, CONFIRMING THE SUSPICION THAT MRS. THATCHER BECAME FOR HIM AND FOR THE PARTY "THE TOKEN WOMAN" IN THE CONSERVATIVE CABINET 1970-74. HEATH UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD HAVE FOUND ACCOMMODATION EASIER IF HE HAD BEEN SUCCEEDED BY A MAN.

3. IN HIS TV INTERVIEW, HEATH SPOKE OUT AGAINST CONSER-VATIVE TACTICS IN PARLIAMENT TO BREAK THE NORMAL CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. HE CAME VERY CLOSE TO CALLING THE BREAK IN PAIRING ARRANGEMENTS ARISING FROM A DISPUTED PARLIAMENTARY VOTE IRRESPONSI-BLE. IN HIS SPEECH IN COMMONS AND IN INTERVIEWS THERE-AFTER, HE CRITICIZED THE OPPOSITION'S ECONOMIC POLICIES AND DISCLOSED A PARTICULAR DISTASTE FOR SIR KEITH JOSEPH AND HIS POLICY THINK-TANK, WHICH HE CALLED "A PRIVATE ARMY." (SIR KEITH HAS ON MANY OCCASIONS INDICA-CONFIDENTIAL

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TED HIS BELIEF THAT HIS POLICIES AND THOSE OF THE PARTY 1970-74 WERE INCORRECT AND CONTRIBUTED DIRECTLY TO INFLA-TION.)

4. PERSONALITIES REMOVED, HEATH OBVIOUSLY SEES A POSSI-BILITY FOR REAFFIRMING THE RIGHTNESS OF HIS POLICIES AND THE CLARITY OF HIS CONCEPT OF BRITAIN'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. THIS IMPULSE

LEADS HIM ALONG A PATH WHICH CONSERVATIVE COLLEAGUES FIND BOTH TORTUOUS AND UNREWARDING. THE NET EFFECT IS THAT HEATH CONTINUES TO LOSE THE RESPECT AND AFFECTION, AS WELL AS SUPPORT, OF COLLEAGUES. EVEN HEATH CANNOT BE UNDER THE ILLUSION OF A POSSIBLE RETURN AS CONSERVATIVE LEADER. HE SEEMS TO BE PINNING HIS HOPES ON ANOTHER FUTURE DISASTE FOR THE CONSERVATIVES AT THE NEXT ELECTION SO SEVERE THAT MRS. THATCHER WILL BE DISLODGED AS LEADER AND REPLACED BY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 10973

SOMEONE MORE INTUNE WITH HEATH'S OWN THINKING (PER-
HAPS PETER WALKER?); ALTERNATIVELY, THAT THINGS WILL
BECOME SO BAD THAT THE NATION WILL CRY OUT FOR A

COALITION GOVERNMENT IN WHICH HE COULD PLAY A LEADING
ROLE.

5. IN THIS PARTICULAR SITUATION WHICH CANNOT BE EASY
FOR MRS. THATCHER, SHE HAS ADOPTED AN ALMOST SILENT
POSITION, ALLOWING ATTACKS ON MR. HEATH TO BE VOICED BY
OTHERS IN THE PARTY. (ONLY RECENTLY SHE ASKED HEATH TO
SERVE AS THE CONSERVATIVE REPRESENTATIVE ON A COMMONS
COMMITTEE TO LOOK AT THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT - AN
OFFER HE REJECTED.) THERE ARE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE MUT-
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TERINGS BY MPS ABOUT HEATH'S "DISLOYALTY" AND COMPARISON
WITH THE "DECENT" RESPONSE OF SIR ALEC AND LORD BUTLER
IN THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD LEADERS WHO REPLACED THEM. IN
A RECENT ARTICLE FOR THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, LORD CARRING-
TON, WHO IS A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF HEATH AND REPORTEDLY
ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO HAS ANY INFLUENCE ON HIM, WAGS
HIS FINGER AT HEATH'S ANTICS ONLY SHORTLY AFTER ATTEND-
ING HEATH'S 60TH BIRTHDAY PARTY. FORMER TORY LEADER LORD
DOUGLAS-HOME RECENTLY TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER OF HIS
LACK OF SUCCESS IN EFFORTS TO GET HEATH TO "CHANGE HIS
COURSE".

6. COMMENT: THE CONSERVATIVES CAN ILL AFFORD TO LOSE A
RESERVOIR OF POLITICAL ABILITY AND EXPERTISE LIKE HEATH.
MRS. THATCHER HAS DEMONSTRATED A GREAT DEAL OF TOLERANCE
TO DATE WITH NO SUCCESS IN TRYING TO WORK OUT THE RELA-
TIONSHIP WITH HEATH. BUT HEATH HIMSELF SEEMS BLIND TO THE
EFFECT HE IS HAVING ON HIS COLLEAGUES AND THE PARTY AT
LARGE. SOME FUTURE SHAKESPEARE MAY WELL CONSIDER THIS
BLINDNESS AND INSENSITIVITY "TRAGIC FLAWS" WHICH EXPLAIN
HIS DOWNFALL.

7. WE BELIEVE HEATH'S PRESENT STANCE IS HIGHLY SELF-
DESTRUCTIVE AND AN IRRITANT RATHER THAN A TRULY DAMAGING
FACTOR FOR THE PARTY. WHILE IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED BY MOST
CONSERVATIVES THAT MRS. THATCHER IS VIRTUALLY "ON TRIAL"
AS LEADER PENDING CONSERVATIVE RESULTS IN THE NEXT GENER-
AL ELECTION (WHENEVER IT COMES), MOST CONSERVATIVE MPS
WOULD NOT SUPPORT HEATH'S RETURN AS LEADER, A POSITION
ONLY INTENSIFIED BY HIS RECENT ACTIONS. WHILE SOME MPS
PROBABLY AGREE WITH HEATH IN HIS DIAGNOSIS OF THE
NATION'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND, TO A LESSER DEGREE,
WITH SOME OF HIS PROPOSED REMEDIES, MANY MPS WOULD PREFER
THAT, IF HE CAN'T BECAUSE OF SCRUPLES JOIN THE THATCHER
TEAM AND STRENGTHEN THE PARTY, THE LEAST HE CAN
DECENTLY DO IS SHUT UP AND GO SAILING.

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